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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANJUL 000011

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SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: AN IRASCIBLE PRESIDENT JAMMEH IN  
YEAR-END INTERVIEW

REF: A. 06 BANJUL 11

[1](#)B. BANJUL 5

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (D)

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (C) In a year-end television interview, an irascible President Jammeh delivered a familiar diatribe against Western donors while also taking a swipe at Senegal. His derisive remarks about the opposition are hardly encouraging in the runup to the National Assembly elections January 25.  
END SUMMARY.

RESENTMENT TOWARD THE WEST  
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[1](#)2. (U) In a year-end interview with the national television service (GRTS), an angry and defiant President Yahya Jammeh turned in a vintage, shoot-from-the hip performance. He asserted that, as a sovereign state, The Gambia would not allow any foreign power to "dictate" to it. Jammeh alluded to the controversy over his invitations to the Iranian and Venezuelan leaders to the GOTG-hosted African Union Summit in July 2006, asserting that the latter "have not done anything wrong, and if I were to do it again, I would still invite them."

[1](#)3. (U) He delivered a familiar diatribe against the West, accusing it of ignoring Africa's needs while pressing it over human rights. Jammeh stated, "if an African government needs something, the West will tell you -- democracy, human rights, good governance." He asserted that, in response to Western pressure, "you (African governments) have to allow the press to accuse you of all that is bad; then, you are the champion of human rights, and they (West) give you chicken change." Continuing in this vein, Jammeh said, "if you allow that to happen (i.e. permit the press attacks), the press will spark a war or riot; if they give you one million dollars, the riot will destroy ten million people, and you go back to square zero."

[1](#)4. (U) Jammeh elaborated further on the theme of the West and other major donors giving Africa short shrift and focussing on other regions in dispensing assistance. He accused the G-8 member states of failing to meet their pledged financial commitments for NEPAD while providing large amounts of aid to Iraq, Afghanistan, and others. Jammeh remarked, "In Iraq, billions of dollars in debt was cancelled, yet Africa cannot

even get debt cancellation."

SWIPE AT SENEGAL  
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¶5. (U) Alluding to the August/October 2005 crisis with Senegal over border and transportation issues and the attendant closure of the Senegalese border with The Gambia, Jammeh stated that "the border closure was imposed on us without any justification." His next remark, "and then they sponsored the coup," indicated Jammeh's ongoing suspicions of a Senegalese hand in the abortive coup plot here in March ¶2006.

DISMISSIVE OF THE OPPOSITION  
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¶6. (U) Jammeh was also critical of The Gambia's political opposition, describing its members as "not genuine," "just selfish," and "supported by foreign elements who do not wish Africa well, let alone The Gambian people."

COMMENT  
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¶7. (C) We have not seen either video footage of Jammeh's remarks or a full transcript; this report is based on a synopsis of his remarks contained in a local private journal, "The Point." Nonetheless, the foregoing themes -- e.g., criticism of the West, derisive commentary on the opposition -- were prominent in his year-end interview in 2005 (ref a) and surface frequently in his other public statements. There was no mention of the U.S. by name, but his anti-Western diatribe was doubtless targetted in part at us; we believe that he remains deeply resentful over the suspension of The Gambia's MCA eligibility in June 2006. His sniping at Senegal -- also unmentioned by name -- points up the ongoing bilateral strains (ref b), although of late Jammeh had

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refrained from going public about his sense of grievance toward the Senegalese. Jammeh's negative remarks about the opposition, while nothing new, hardly serve as an encouraging backdrop for the National Assembly elections scheduled for January 25. END COMMENT  
STAFFORD